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Holmes Radiates Goodwill in

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Carbondale- As Larry Holmes entered the doors of the Carbondale Area Junior-Senior High School cafeteria Saturday morning to attend a luncheon in his honor, he didn't look like the menacing heavyweight champion that he is.

He didn't look like the man who pummelled a helpless Leon Spinks for three rounds before knocking him out. He didn't look like the fighter who methodically threw slashing left jabs mixed with straight overhand rights into the face of Gerry Cooney for 13 rounds.

Instead, Holmes looked like a businessman ready to wrap up one more deal before returning home to his wife and children. Elegantly attired in a dark sport coat with grey slacks, he effortlessly made his way through the crowd smiling, shaking hands, and going through all the motions that the heavyweight champion of the world is expected to go through.

Selected as grand marshal for the Fourth Annual Carbondale Pioneer Days celebration, Holmes took his celebrity status in stride, posing for pictures with anyone who asked and signing autographs for some people who didn't even know who he was.

His hands, which are long, slender and smooth, look more like the hands of a surgeon rather than those of a boxer. Meanwhile, his 6-3 frame isn't as imposing hidden in a suit as it is in the ring.

But mention the word "boxing" to him and a remarkable transformation takes place. The eyes light up, the smile becomes more of a sly grin, and any doubts that Holmes is not a fighter are soon dispelled.

Unbeaten in 40 professional fights, Holmes has successfully defended his title 12 times, 11 of those by knockout. But due to the lingering presence of Muhammad Ali, Holmes has been unable to achieve the universal recognition that he rightly deserves.

Understandably, he is hurt by this and at times it surfaces during his speech. "Maybe if I lived in New York or someplace like that I'd get the publicity," said Holmes. "In Easton there's only one paper, in Allentown it's the same, but what can you do? I've lived in Easton for 28 years now and I wouldn't change that. After being all over the world I realize my town is a special place that I'd never leave."

Holmes also admits to having a "special place in his heart for Scranton" - the city where he started his pro career over nine years ago. He fought nine times in Scranton, his last fight taking place on Aug. 16, 1975 when he knocked out Obie English in the seventh round.

Adding fuel to recent rumors that he would like to fight "one of his last fights in the city where he started" Holmes told *The Times* after the luncheon that he "would love to end my career in Scranton if possible."

However, he later admitted that the "money would have to be right, somewhere in the area of $2 million" before it could become a reality.

Holmes, who recently signed a contract to defend his title against Randall "Tex" Cobb at the end of this year, said he "will fight a couple of more times and then retire." According to Holmes, the fight will take place some time in November.

When asked about a possible rematch with Cooney, Holmes smiled and said "I'd fight Cooney for $25 million... maybe $20 million. It doesn't look like anyone will come up with that money so I don't know if we'll fight again."

The champion also stated that "Cooney was probably pushed too fast. He didn't have enough fights with contendors to deserve a title shot and I don't think his heart is in it (boxing)," said Holmes. "Anyway he's only 25 years old (Cooney just turned 26 this week) and he's made $10 million. I don't know if he'd want to fight me again."

While the Cooney title fight may still considered to be a "sore spot" for Holmes, he's not afraid to talk about it. In fact, he's very free with his time and proudly wears the title of "the people's champion."